

The Cross: altruism through self-risking

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Introduction

What is the cross?

Pursuing the cross:

Somehow \$1 million is lying on the floor in a busy train station. It is out in the open and people are passing it by. Why is it still there?

Sometimes it's because it's terrifying to think of picking it up, and often when people do, they suffer agony.

But perhaps out of love, someone would risk picking it up.

--

Undergoing the cross:

There are repercussions that can come from pursuing the cross. Suffering, shame, death, disability, foregone opportunities.

This booklet

I originally intended to write a book on the subject of the cross. But I think on this subject, it is better for people to do the work of learning themselves. Different people need to get different things out of this subject area. So this booklet is a guide for those who want to study the cross themselves.

You can study the following books, perhaps returning to them over the years.

Reading List

You could read this reading list in the order that it's written, or in any order you like. I give options on some books ("one option being..."). I chose them not because I know they are the best, but because I've read them and they are basically good.

You could read everything on the list, or only some of it.

The Bible: Mark, Matthew, Luke, John, Acts, Hebrews, Revelation, the story of Samson (Judges 13 - 16). (This selection of the Bible is roughly the length of a novel.)

Nineteen Eighty-Four by George Orwell

A biography of Martin Luther King, Jr. (one option being *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.* edited by Clayborne Carson)

Simone Weil: *Gravity and Grace*, and a biography of her (one option being Simone Pétrement's)

Churchill and Orwell by Thomas E. Ricks (or a biography of Winston Churchill and a biography of George Orwell)

In the Shadow of the Banyan by Vaddey Ratner. (An autobiographical novel.)

Discussion

David Bowie

David Bowie, when young (mid 20s), was a shy, creepy, weird person (my impression from interview clips).

He sort of pursued the cross. (He played the character of Ziggy Stardust, a messiah figure of sorts, and had many fans to "feed" spiritually through pursuing his art.)

He definitely underwent the cross (or something like it). (Around the year 1975, he was heavily into cocaine and the occult, breaking down his mind.) Was this caused by him playing Ziggy or having a lot of fans? If not, it was a terrible experience, the kind of thing people can go through when they undergo the cross.

He did his most critically-acclaimed work as he recovered (Berlin trilogy, *Scary Monsters and Super Creeps*), his most commercially-successful work after that (*Let's Dance*).

He became a personable, humane, fun, grounded, weird friend to humanity in his older age (my impression from interview clips).

Bowie was a fan of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

I heard Bowie, in his later years (probably 1990s or 2000s) in a clip on YouTube (probably an interview) that I can no longer find, say something against messianism. ("Messiahs" may often pursue the cross.)

This is too weak of evidence to say that Bowie turned against messianism in his older age, or that he turned against the cross. But we can consider a fictional Bowie who did. His experience with being a messiah-like person being so bad that he warns people against it. Perhaps this fictional Bowie also turns against valuing the pursuit of the cross.

The real, older, Bowie was a popular, healthy-looking, rich man who seemed to have a happy marriage. Such people are probably not pursuing the cross, probably not undergoing it. But that is an image of him, and maybe his inner life was one of altruistic self-risking. But his image or example seems more one of personal success and wellness.

***The Lord of the Rings* by J. R. R. Tolkien**

I thought about putting these books in the reading list, but they are so long and so many people have already read them.

This plot summary is from memory and might not be perfect:

Frodo bore the Ring of Power to be destroyed in Mordor. He had a faithful servant, Sam, and an untrustworthy servant, Gollum, who helped him in. Frodo had trouble throwing the Ring of Power into the fire to be destroyed, but Gollum, lusting after the Ring, bit off Frodo's finger (the one with the Ring on it) and fell into the fire, destroying the Ring.

Frodo felt the after-effects of bearing the Ring and of the spiritual attacks along the way to destroying the Ring.

After the Ring was destroyed, Frodo went back home to the Shire, which was all messed up. Then some time after that situation was resolved, Frodo went across the sea to a place of rest, never to do altruistic work in Middle-Earth again.

"Archetypes": classes of life stories of the cross

archetype: source

people trying to make things better in a repressive or dysfunctional country: *A History of Violence* by Óscar Martínez

the philosopher: read about Descartes (I read *Discourse on Method* and *Meditations on First Philosophy*)

the missionary: *Serving as Senders Today* and *The Reentry Team* by Neal Pirollo

the secular prophet: *Churchill and Orwell*, already mentioned

the whistleblower

the altruist who burns out

End notes

If you know of other books that fit the theme (especially ones not from the English-speaking or Western world), let

me know. If anyone suggests any to me, I will put them here: 10v24.net/cross

This study guide may be best pursued as part of a discussion with other people.

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